

Message Text

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HERewith FULL TEXT LEAD WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL
THURSDAY JANUARY 18 HEADE "A FIRST BIG STEP IN THE MIDDLE
EAST":

EGYPT'S AND ISRAEL'S AGREEMENT TO DISENGAGE THEIR NOW-
TANGLED FORCES ALONG A LINE ON THE SINAI SIDE OF THE SUEZ
CANAL IS THE FIRST ARAB-ISRAELI AGREEMENT EVER ON ANYTHING
MORE THAN A CEASE-FIRE, THE FIRST POLITICAL FRUIT OF THE
OCTOBER WAR, AND THE FIRST STEP--WE ALL MUST HOPE--TOWARD
AN ENDURING SETTLEMENT. ITS MOST PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

IS THAT, ONCE SIGNED AND FULFILLED THIS AGREEMENT WILL END
THE MINI-WAR THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON SINCE OCTOBER BETWEEN

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WILL MAKE THE RENEWAL OF FULL-SCALE WAR MUCH MORE DIFFICULT

AND UNLIKELY, AT LEAST ON THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI FRONT, WHICH IS FAR AND AWAY THE MOST IMPORTANT FRONT.

EGYPT WILL BE ABLE TO BREATHE FREELY ABOUT ITS THIRD ARMY, WHICH HAS BEEN SURROUNDED FOR THREE MONTHS; NOR WILL

ISRAELI FORCES BE WITHIN SUCH CLOSE RANGE OF CAIRO. ISRAEL WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO TAKE CASUALTIES OR TO CONTINUE ITS MOBILIZATION TO THE SAME DRAINING DEGREE. WHILE THE TWO SIDES GAIN THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE IN PUTTING SUBSTANCE ON THE FORM OF THIS FIRST REAL AGREEMENT; THEY CAN NEGOTIATE NEW AGREEMENTS. THE ATMOSPHERE FOR FURTHER TALKS CAN HARDLY FAIL TO BE WARMED. IN PARTICULAR, REOPENING THE SUEZ CANAL SEEMS A NATURAL NEXT STEP.

A CASE CAN BE MADE THAT IN THE MIDEAST, SO LONG STARVED FOR SIGNS OF ARAB-ISRAELI ACCORD, ANY AGREEMENT IS A GOOD AGREEMENT AND THE TERMS DO NOT MUCH MATTER. THAT IS A CARELESS VIEW. THE TERMS DETERMINE WHETHER THE AGREEMENT WILL BE SUPPORTED AT HOME AND WHETHER IT WILL LEAD TO FURTHER PRODUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS INSTANCE, THE TERMS HAVE NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC; NOR HAVE ANY PRIVATE UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH UNDERLIE THE TERMS. BUT ALREADY IN ISRAEL, MRS. MEIR'S PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION IS CHARGING "SELLOUT," APPARENTLY ON GROUNDS THAT, FOR ITS START ON WITHDRAWAL ISRAEL IS GAINING INSUFFICIENT SECURITY AND POLITICAL RETURN. IT WILL BE HER GOVERNMENT'S TASK, AND IN A SENSE EGYPT'S TASK AS WELL TO EXPLAIN AND PUT INTO EFFECT THE NEW AGREEMENT IN A WAY PERMITTING FURTHER DIPLOMATIC PROGRESS.

OPPOSITION, THOUGH LESS CONSPICUOUS, MAY WELL DEVELOP INSIDE EGYPT TOO, PROBABLY ON THE LINES THAT, BY DISENGAGING FORCES IN THE CONTEXT OF A PARTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL EGYPT RELINQUISHES ITS BEST MEANS TO PRESS ISRAEL FOR A FULL WITHDRAWAL. OTHER ARABS MAY CHARGE THAT MR. SADAT IS PURSUING A SEPARATE PEACE. AGAIN, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS A STAKE IN "HELPING" PRESIDENT SADAT. THE MODERATES ON BOTH SIDES ARE EACH OTHER'S TACIT ALLIES. MODERATES ARE THOSE WHO REALIZE THAT THERE CAN BE NO

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ELIMINATING ALL RISK.

IN ANNOUNCING THE AGREEMENT YESTERDAY, PRESIDENT NIXON DREW DESERVED ATTENTION TO THE KEY ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES, AND OF SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER PERSONALLY IN BRINGING EGYPT AND ISRAEL TOGETHER. BUT PRIDE IN AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT MUST BE TEMPERED BY AWARENESS THAT THE AMERICAN ROLE, HOWEVER CENTRAL AND SKILLFULLY

HANDLED, IS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE DIRECT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI
CONTACTS WHICH OFFER THE BEST HOPE OF BUILDING MUTUAL
TRUST AND A MUTUAL COMMITMENT TO A SETTLEMENT WITH THE

REASSURANCE AND EGYPT THE CRUTCH OF DR. KISSINGER'S PER-
SONAL INVOLVEMENT. CERTAINLY IN RECENT MONTHS THE UNITED
STATES HAS PROVED ITSELF, TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S
EVIDENT SATISFACTION, TO BE AN EMINENTLY RELIABLE PATRON.
THE UNITED STATES HAS DONE THIS, MOREOVER EVEN WHILE
MAINTAINING IF NOT ENHANCING ITS STANDING IN EGYPT.
BUT THE SECRETARY'S VIRTUOSITY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO
OBSCURE THE ESSENTIAL AND CONTINUING NEED FOR ISRAEL
AND ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS TO TAKE UP TOGETHER AN EVER-
INCREASING PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIATING THEIR
OWN PEACE. (END TEXT).

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